

Above Reproach: The Integrity of the Pastoral Office

Rev. John C. Wille

Introduction:

The pastoral office is indispensable in the life of the church. C.F.W. Walther writes in Thesis III regarding the pastoral office, *“The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time”* [Kirche und Amt, p. 22].

To fill this Office of the Holy Ministry God calls ordinary men through His church to serve pastors. With that there is an inherent weakness; not in God or His Office, but in us. Though we are ordained, not one of us is perfect. We are frail human beings, sinners. Each of us is susceptible to the weakness of our sinful flesh. Each of us lives in a world and a culture corrupted by sin. Each of us is vulnerable to the mischief of the evil one. As one of our confessions attests, we sin by our own fault, by our own most grievous fault. The forgiveness for the sake of Christ that we proclaim is also forgiveness even for our own sin.

In spite of the sinful men who fill the Office, our Lord in Holy Scripture maintains understandably high expectations regarding the teaching, life and behavior of those who serve in the Office. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7. And those standards ought never be compromised. So how do we reconcile the high expectations of the Office with the sinful frailties of those who are called to fill the Office? Can any man serve in the Office regardless of his reputation? Can a man’s sin or his hubris disqualify a pastor from serving in the Office? What if a pastor is faithful in his proclamation of God’s Word and his administration of the Sacraments but is on the wrong side of being “above reproach”? Can a pastor who finds himself on the wrong side of “above reproach” be dismissed from his call, and/or removed from the LCMS roster?

In February 2009 Rev. Dr. Lane Seitz shared the following paragraphs as part of a presentation to the Council of Presidents regarding “above reproach”

On February 11, 1980, Dr. Martin Scharleman delivered a paper to the Council of Presidents, wrestling specifically with the topic of “The Pastoral Office and Divorce, Remarriage, and Moral Deviation.” In his presentation he stated, “Where the high standards [of the pastoral office] have been violated in such a way as to scandalize not only members of the church but even outsiders, confession of wrongdoing and absolution extended suffice to restore such a person to the community of believers. But it does not follow therefrom that they may continue in the office of pastor, or be reinstated to it, as the case may be.” Scharleman continues regarding the concept of “reinstatement” to the pastoral office by stating: “Since the church works with principles that are necessarily infused with Gospel values and since it is hazardous to work with absolutes in dealing with any problems that affect people in their sinfulness, it is conceivable that, under very exceptional circumstances, a former pastor could, so to speak, “work out his salvation” to the point of being in a position to be reconsidered as a person qualified to be entrusted once more with the powers of the pastoral office. Such instances will obviously be as rare as the cases of congregational treasurers being restored to that office after absconding with the members' contributions, even though they have shown contrition and repentance and are restored to the Christian fellowship.” Thus the pastor must live with the reality that there are consequences for sin.

The issue for those involved in admitting men to the seminary, certifying them for ordination, supervising their doctrine and life, removing them from the roster, or reinstating them to the roster is this: “At what point does the behavior of a man disqualify him from being declared ‘fit’ to hold the office or continue in the office?” There is no easy answer to this question.

Your planning committee and your district president are to be commended for wanting to tackle what it means to be “above reproach”. We all know pastors and commissioned members who have fallen, whose lives and actions have placed them on the wrong side of being “above reproach”. For that reason the best place for us to begin our conversation about “above reproach” lies in the words of Holy Scripture, God’s inspired Word.

Theses on “Above Reproach”:

1. Christ has entrusted the Office of the Keys to the church originally and immediately. The pastor receives the divine call mediately through the congregation.
2. Christ instituted the pastoral office for the benefit of the church, His Bride.
3. The pastor serves in the stead of the congregation and on behalf of the congregation proclaiming God’s Word and administering the Sacraments, both in the church and to the world.
4. The pastor ministers in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus, both in the church and to the world; the congregation respecting the pastoral office as divinely instituted.
5. Integrity of life and behavior are critical and necessary elements of the pastoral office.
6. The pastor is accountable both to God and to the church for both his life and doctrine; the pastor’s life modeling [τύποι] the doctrine he proclaims; or sadly perhaps not.
7. Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one’s office disqualifies a man from being considered “fit” for the pastoral office, from being declared “fit” to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, and may keep him from being reinstated to the office of the ministry.

Part 1. Holy Scripture. The inspired Word of God regarding “Above Reproach”

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Revelation 19:6-8 “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [cf. also Ephesians 5:25ff.]

Revelation 2:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Ephesians 4:11-14 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers [τούς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους], to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ [πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,], until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children,

tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- **τούς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους:** If in Eph. 4:11 the common article makes it plain that the διδάσκαλοι are identical with the ποιμένες, this lies in the nature of the case; for the → ποιμήν is the one who is responsible for the life of the community, and therefore διδάσκειν in the widest sense is part of his office. This is in agreement with Did., 15, 1, where the congregation is summoned to appoint ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους ἀξίους τοῦ κυρίου that these may discharge the λειτουργία τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων; the function of the διδάσκαλος is here, too, a function of divine service. It is self-evident, therefore, that in the first instance the διδάσκαλος does what he teaches [*Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **καταρτισμός** is used at Eph. 4:12, in the context of the edifying of the body of Christ, to denote the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry. The establishment of the community in work for the kingdom of God in the widest sense thus constitutes for Paul a material precondition of the upbuilding and consequently the actualisation of the community. [*Vol. 1: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (476). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans]
- **οἰκοδομή** denotes in the first instance the act of building: [*Vol. 5: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (145). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **cf. Jeremiah 1:10**, See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”
- **1 Corinthians 3:1-11** According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (cf. also Romans 15:20)

1 Corinthians 4:1–2 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God [**ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ**]. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

- **ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ:** A person who renders service—‘servant.’ Helper. “The special feature of ὑπηρέτης, however, is that he willingly learns his task and goal from another who is over him in an organic order but without prejudice to his personal dignity and worth.” [Kittel, Gerhard; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 8:533]
- **οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ:** Manager. One who has the authority and responsibility for something—one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, administrator, manager, a steward.

2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [**δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς**]; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

- **τὴν διακονίαν:** service, ministry, role or position of service, waiting upon, serve food and drink to those eating. [cf. also Acts 1:15-26, Acts 6:1–7]
- **τῆς καταλλαγῆς:** to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken (the componential features of this series of meanings involve (1) disruption of friendly relations because of (2) presumed or real provocation, (3) overt behavior designed to remove hostility, and (4) restoration of original friendly relations)—‘to reconcile, to make things right with one

another, reconciliation.' [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.]

1 Timothy 3:1-7 πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. **Εἴ τις ἐπίσκοπῆς ὀρέγεται**, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. **2** δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, νηφάλιον σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδασκτικόν, **3** μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικῆ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον, **4** τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος **5** (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προσῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται;), **6** μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθῆς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου. **7** δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμόν ἐμπέση καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου. [Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (1993). *The Greek New Testament* (27th ed.) (544–545). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft]

3 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

• **ἐπίσκοπῆς** – overseer, bishop, one who watches over. 1 Peter 2:25

- At a first glance it would seem that ἐπίσκοπος here merely strengthens ποιμήν, and thus denotes one who keeps watch over the flock.
- In 1 Tm. 3:1 **ἐπίσκοπή** is a distinct office which one may seek. To attain it, certain qualifications must be met. It is to be noted that the passage simply outlines the qualifications and not the duties. The author has clear rules by which the congregation must be guided in its selection. The sobriety with which the requirements are stated, some of them being assumed as self-evident, and the fact that in regard to endowment for the episcopal office there is no further reference to the Holy Spirit but simply to essential human qualifications, show how strongly the development is already affected by everyday needs. [Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (617). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- With pastoral wisdom 1 Tm. lists the requirements to be sought in those who bear it. First comes moral reliability. No particular ascetic attainment is demanded. The leader of a Christian community is also exposed to very human temptations. But he must lead an honourable and exemplary life, avoiding excess. This is what is meant when it is said that he must not be intemperate or quarrelsome or avaricious. Secondly, he must give proof in his own home of his ability to direct the life of the congregation. [Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (617). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **Gerhard:** It (ἐπίσκοπή) is attributed in general to *all ministers of the church*. The duty of them all is ἐπίσκοπος, to watch out for the flock entrusted to their protection[fides] and to have diligent care for it. In Acts 20:28 the apostle Paul says to the presbyters of the church of Ephesus: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops to feed the church of God." [Johann Gerhard, *Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1*. Pages 35-36]

- **Gerhard:** Specifically, it is attributed to those ministers of the church who have been entrusted not only with the care of the flock but also have been put in charge of inspecting the shepherds [pastors]; to them has been committed both the duty of teaching the church and of examining the teaching, life, and behavior of the shepherds. [Johann Gerhard, *Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1*. Pages 36] ed. comment: Today we call them “district presidents”.
 - **LCMS Constitution, Article XII, 7.** The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district. To this end they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the circuit visitors, who therefore shall regularly make their reports to the district president. [page 14]
- **ὀρέγομαι:** to eagerly desire to accomplish some goal or purpose—‘to strive to attain, to aspire to, to eagerly long for.’
 - **ἀνεπίληπτον** – “inviolable,” “unassailable,” “blameless”. In the NT it occurs only in 1 Tm. 3:2; 5:7: one who cannot be attacked (even by non-Christians) because of his moral conduct. [Vol. 4: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (9). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
 - **μῆκος γυναικὸς ἄνδρα** – the husband of one wife.
 - **νηφάλιον** – sober-minded, may be idiomatically rendered as “one who holds himself in” or “one who always has a halter on himself”.
 - **Σώφρονα** – self-controlled, pertaining to being sensible and moderate in one’s behavior.
 - **Κόσμιον** – respectable, pertaining to being modest in the sense of moderate and well-ordered.
 - **Φιλόξενον** – hospitable, showing hospitality to strangers.
 - **Διδακτικόν** – able to teach, being able to teach.
 - **μὴ πάροιον** – not a drunkard, person who habitually drinks too much and thus becomes a drunkard person.
 - **μὴ πλήκτην** – not violent but gentle, pugnacious and demanding—bully, violent person.
 - **μὴ** – a marker of emphatic negation – “by no means, certainly not, God forbid”.
 - **ἐπιεικῆ** – gentle, gracious, forbearing.
 - **ἄμαχον** – pertaining to a lack of conflict and contention, not quarrelsome, not contentious, peaceful.
 - **ἀφιλάργυρον** – not a lover of money, not being desirous or greedy for money, not loving wealth.
 - **τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον** – to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action—influencing his own household well.
 - **τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος** – children being in subjection with all propriety; i.e., with behavior which is befitting, implying a measure of dignity leading to respect—propriety.
 - **μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθῆς** – certainly not a recent convert, to be so arrogant as to be practically demented—“to be insanely arrogant, to be extremely proud, or to become puffed up with conceit.

- **εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου** – fall(ἐμπέση) into the condemnation of the devil
- **δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν**, – It is necessary to have a good testimony from those outside.
- **ὄνειδισμὸν**, “insult,” “abuse,” “reproach,”
- **ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν** “lest into reproach”. In 1 Tm. 3:7 blamelessness of walk is required of the ἐπίσκοπος. This is to find expression in the testimony of those who do not belong to the Christian community, lest the ἐπίσκοπος should come under reproach and defamation (ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν ἐμπέση). [Vol. 5: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (241). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **παγίδα**, snare or noose. In 1 Tm. 3:7 and 2 Tm. 2:25 f. there is ref. to the παγὶς τοῦ διαβόλου. Acc. to 1 Tim. 3:7 bad conduct on the bishop’s part has two results: the ἐπίσκοπος is rightly despised by the people (→ ὄνειδισμός, 241, 20 ff.), and he is an easy prey for Satan, who thus gets him in his power and renders him unfit for service to the congregation. [Vol. 5: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (594). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
 - Footnote to the above: through slanders on the part of the ἕξωθεν the wrongly calumniated bishop “may easily err in his faith and be unfaithful in the discharge of his office.” “In such a situation Satan may with prospect of success cast a snare in his way by which he will come into Satan’s power and fall away completely from the faith.” Cf. also Dib. Past., ad loc.: “ ‘The snare of the devil’ is easy to understand after the ref. to ὄνειδισμός: one should not give the old accuser even the appearance of a reason for complaint (in the form of calumnies by opponents).” H. J. Holtzmann, Hand-Commentar z. NT, III, 234 supplies τοῦ διαβόλου with εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν and interprets the v. as follows: “The idea, then, is that a Christian can first fall under slander, then into captivity, and finally under the judgment of the devil.” This is in itself a true thought, but it is not what the verse says. [Theological dictionary of the New Testament. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Titus 1:5-9

Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃς κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους, ὡς ἐγὼ σοι διαταξάμην, **6** εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα. **7** δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, μὴ αὐθάδη, μὴ ὀργίλον, μὴ πάροινον, μὴ πλήκτην, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, **8** ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον φιλάγαθον σώφρονα δίκαιον ὄσιον ἐγκρατῆ, **9** ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾦ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- **ἐπιδιορθώσῃ** to cause matters to be ordered in the correct manner— ‘to set right, to correct, to put into order.’ ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ ‘I left you in Crete for you to put in order the things that still needed doing’ Tt 1:5. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-*

English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (611). New York: United Bible Societies.]

- **καταστήσης, καθίστημι**, “To set in an elevated position, in an office,” “to install”. [Vol. 3: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (444). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **ἀνέγκλητος** This term denotes a person or thing against which there can be no ἔγκλημα and which is thus “free from reproach,” “without stain,” “guiltless”; [Vol. 1: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (356). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **πρεσβυτέρους** In the NT there are three examples of ordinary usage in the Pastorals. In Tt. 1:6 it is demanded that Titus should see to it in presbyters: εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος ... δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμου (v. 7). The predicates which follow show us that in relation to these offices we have a demand for the blamelessness (in the sense of civic ethics) which they must have for their work as that of a θεοῦ οἰκονόμου. [Vol. 1: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (356). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

1 Peter 5:1-4

5 Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός· 2 ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως κατὰ θεόν, μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως, 3 μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου· 4 καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομμεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- **ἐπισκοποῦντες**, exercising oversight. The official work of presbyters, who are obviously the same as the ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι of communities in the Gk. world (→ 615 f.), is thus to follow the pattern of the ποιμὴν καὶ ἐπίσκοπος Jesus Christ, consisting in ποιμαίνειν and ἐπισκοπεῖν, in feeding the community and in responsible care for it, in watching over its eternal welfare. The comparison of this responsibility of the elders in the individual church with the work of Jesus Christ in relation to the universal Church conveys to us the dignity of the office as it was understood by early Christianity. Luther says concerning this passage: “To be an *episcopus* or bishop is to give good heed, to be honest, to watch diligently.” [Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (604). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς**, not out of obligation, because it is a must, by compulsion
- **μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες**, Domineering: 1 Peter 5:4 κατακυριεύω, overpower, gain dominion over, subdue. In the 6th cent. A.D. it came to mean “to have title to something.” 2 Cor. 1:24
 - i.e., the elders, each over his portion, are not to exercise their power for themselves and therewith against those entrusted to them. [Vol. 3: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (1098). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

- **τῶν κλήρων**, the κληρος is the portion allotted to each individual elder ¹*Vol. 3: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (764). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

- **Τύποι**: a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided— The more a life is moulded by the word, the more it becomes τύπος, a model or mould. It is not a mould which forces nor is it an example which can be imitated. It can just be lived out again in freedom, namely, by faith. Along the same lines as in Paul, the exhortation in 1 Pt. 5:3 admonishes those who represent the word to become τύποι ... τοῦ ποιμνίου, “examples to the flock.” The word cannot just be recited; it can be attested only as one’s own word which shapes one’s own conduct. The office-bearer is thus admonished: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word (i.e., preaching), in conversation,” 1 Tm. 4:12; cf. Tt. 2:7: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern (in the doing) of good works” [*Vol. 8: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (250). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans]

- **ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου**: “but becoming models or visible patterns for the flock to imitate.” Cf. Philippians 4:8-9, Titus 2:7

3 John 9–11 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority [ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς]. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good.

- **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης**: to like or love to be first in rank or position—“to desire to be first, to desire to order others.” “love to have the preeminence”

- **οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς**: to listen or pay attention to a person, with resulting conformity to what is advised or commanded—to pay attention to and obey.

- **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς**: “but Diotrephes, who always wants to order others, will not pay any attention to us”.

1 Corinthians 8:9 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

- **πρόσκομμα** cause of falling, the stone on which there is the stumbling, which leads to a fall, destruction.

- **πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν**: that which provides an opportunity or occasion for causing someone to sin—“that which causes someone to sin” or “that which provides an occasion for someone to sin.” In other words, this action or lifestyle gets in the way of the Gospel, handicapping the pastor’s ministry, preventing people from hearing the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 6:3ff We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry [**Μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν**], ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way [**ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῇ ἡ διακονία**]: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

- **Μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν**, lit. “Not once in nothing”. Paul lays down for himself as an apostle the principle: μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῆ ἡ διακονία, 2 C. 6:3. According to the context προσκοπήν διδόναι has to be an act which makes reproach possible, and this Paul wants to avoid for the sake of the cause whether the offence be well-founded and justified or not,... Here too, however, the ultimate concern is the salvation of the community. [Vol. 6: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (754). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **Προσκοπήν**, “occasion of falling, of taking offence,” also “reason for antipathy”: μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, 2 C. 6:3. [Vol. 6: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (747). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- **ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῆ ἡ διακονία** to find fault with someone by implying blame—‘to criticize, to censure, to find fault with.’ ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῆ ἡ διακονία ‘we don’t want anyone to find fault with our work’ 2 Cor 6:3. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Vol. 1: *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (435). New York: United Bible Societies]

Exodus 2:14 Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.”

Jeremiah 10:20-21, My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are not; there is no one to spread my tent again and to set up my curtains. For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.

Ezekiel 34:8-10 “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.”

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Part 2: The Lutheran Confessions and Dr. Martin Luther

Augsburg Confession: Article V: Of the Ministry

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel* [German: Predigtamt. Latin: ministerium] and administering the Sacraments was instituted [emphasis added]. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake. 4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. [Concordia Triglotta]

Augsburg Confession: Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order

Of Ecclesiastical Order [emphasis added] they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. [*Concordia Triglotta*]

- **Rite vocatus** means called in a regular manner by a proper public authority. This is not a matter of “ritual.” [Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Footnote 81.]

Smalcald Articles

5] All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualizing and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words. 6] Just as also our enthusiasts [at the present day] condemn the outward Word, and nevertheless they themselves are not silent, but they fill the world with their pratings and writings, as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the apostles, but [first] through their writings and words he must come...9] In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power [life], and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomet. 10] Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. 11] It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments. [*Concordia Triglotta*; Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article 8, paragraphs 5-11 selected]

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

In 1 Cor. 3, 6, Paul makes ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is above the ministers.

[emphasis added] Hence superiority or lordship over the Church or the rest of the ministers is not ascribed to Peter [in preference to other apostles]. For he says thus: *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, i.e.,* let neither the other ministers nor Peter assume for themselves lordship or superiority over the Church; let them not burden the Church with traditions; let not the authority of any avail more than the Word [of God]; let not the authority of Cephas be opposed to the authority of the other apostles, as they reasoned at that time: “Cephas, who is an apostle of higher rank, observes this; therefore, both Paul and the rest ought to observe this.” Paul removes this pretext from Peter, and denies [Not so, says Paul, and makes Peter doff his little hat, namely, the claim] that his authority is to be preferred to the rest or to the Church. [*Triglotta*, paragraph 11]

- **Triglotta**, Latin text: 1 Cor. 3:6, “*Paulus exaequat ministros et docet ecclesiam esse supra ministros.*” [emphasis added]
- **Triglotta**, German text: 1 Cor. 3:6, “*Macht Paulus alle kirchendiener gleich und lehrt, dass die kirche mehr sei den die Diener.*” [emphasis added]
- **Kolb, Wengert, Editor’s Introduction to the Treatise:** 4. In 1 Corinthians 3[:4–8*, 21–22*] Paul regards all ministers as equals and teaches that the church is superior to its ministers. Thus he grants neither preeminence nor lordship over the church or the other ministers to Peter. For he says, “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas” [1 Cor. 3:21–22*], which is to say, neither Peter nor the other ministers may assume lordship or preeminence over the church or burden the church with traditions or allow the authority of any person to count for more than the

Word. [Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (331). Minneapolis: Fortress Press]

Treatise on the Power and Primacy

24] In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys adds, Matt. 18, 19: If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc. Therefore he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church, just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling. [Triglotta, Treatise, paragraph 24, p. 511]

Part 3: Words to consider from Dr. Martin Luther

Luther: 2. *He must be above reproach.* This is the first quality he must have. The man who wants to investigate, correct, and teach others should be above reproach. To be beyond comparison is shameful for a teacher; that is, that he is beyond accusation and can neither rightly nor justly be accused. After all, there is no one who is above reproach before God. Paul writes: "I am conscious of no evil" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4). Let the Our Father stand: "Forgive us." Before God no one is above reproach, but before men the bishop is to be so, that he may not be a fornicator, an adulterer, a greedy man, a foul-mouthed person, a drunkard, a gambler, a slanderer. If he is falsely accused, no harm; he is still above reproach; no law can accuse him before men. Samuel and Moses are good examples. Samuel said, "If I have defrauded anyone, etc." (cf. 1 Sam. 12:3). There he showed how innocent he was, as far as men were concerned. Moses spoke this way before Korah (cf. Num. 16:15). To live this way, that you do not harm your neighbor by theft or adultery, means that no man can accuse you of anything [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 28: 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (1 Ti 3:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: As for the rest, read what the apostle says in 1 Tim. 3:2 and in Titus 1:7 and 2:7: "For a bishop must be above reproach." Therefore every priest should know that he is a priest not for himself but for others, and he should strive above all to be endowed with the greatest mercy, in order that he may know how to bear the sins and the ignorance of others. For thus one reads throughout the Book of Judges: "And the Lord raised up a deliverer for them." Therefore they are pictured as priests, called priests, and commanded to be priests who should have the same reputation that formerly the kings of Israel had, so that even their enemies were confident of their mercy. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 29: Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Heb 5:1). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: But St. Paul, I Timothy 3[:1–7], describes what a true bishop is like: "This is indeed sure: Whoever desires a bishopric seeks a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt preacher, no drunkard, one who does not curse, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church, or the common good? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the slanderer. Moreover he must be well thought of by unbelievers, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the slanderer." Now see whether it is not a noble task to be a bishop in whose office are so many noble virtues! St. Paul does not want him to be a recent convert who has just come to the faith or one who is young in the faith, so that the slanderer may not have good cause and reason to judge him and to say, "See how they put a fool over the eggs." Instead, he should be an experienced and brave man so that the slanderer must be ashamed to

speaking evil of him. [Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 39: Luther's works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (254–255). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.]

Luther: Before God, however there is no distinction and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, p. 55)

Luther: You must understand this in such a way that it does not take away the right of the man in the public ministry of preaching to judge matters of doctrine as well as of life. Indeed, it is incumbent on him in his office to rebuke publicly whatever does not square with true doctrine, for the very purpose of preventing sects from coming in and taking hold. When he sees that life is wrong, he must likewise denounce it and resist it. He is put there to oversee this, and he will have to give account of it (Heb. 13:17). In fact, whenever any Christian sees his neighbor doing wrong, he has the duty of admonishing him and restraining him, which is impossible without judging and passing judgment. But this is all done on the basis of an office or a commission, which Christ, is not discussing here, as we have said often enough. What is forbidden is that everyone may go ahead on the basis of his own ideas and make a doctrine and spirit of his own, imagining that he is to be Master Smart Aleck, who is supposed to correct everybody and to criticize him, though he has no commission to do anything of the sort. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 21: The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Mt 7:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: The keys are given to him who stands on this rock by faith, to whomever the Father has given it. Now you cannot tell whether any person remains on the rock, for one falls today and the other tomorrow just as Peter fell. Therefore, no one is certain to possess the keys except the church, that is, those who stand on this rock. Only the Christian church has the keys; otherwise no one, not even a pope or bishop, may use them as having been entrusted with them by the congregation. A pastor performs the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs all other functions [*Aemter*] by which he serves the congregation not in his own name but in the place of the congregation. [Walther: *Church and Ministry*, p. 276]

Luther: For we must believe and be sure of this, that baptism does not belong to us but to Christ, that the gospel does not belong to us but to Christ, that the office of preaching does not belong to us but to Christ, that the sacrament [of the Lord's Supper] does not belong to us but to Christ, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins, do not belong to us but to Christ. In summary, the offices and sacraments do not belong to us but to Christ, for he has ordained all this and left it behind as a legacy in the church to be exercised and used to the end of the world; and he does not lie or deceive us. Therefore, we cannot make anything else out of it but must act according to his command and hold to it. [Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 38: Luther's Works, vol. 38 : Word and Sacrament IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). *Luther's Works* (200). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.]

Luther: Paul's frequent use of the word "stewardship" or "household," "ministry," "minister," "servant," "one serving the gospel," etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function. The authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers. In this view of the ministry, the so-called "indelible character" vanishes and the perpetuity of the office is shown to be fictitious. A minister may be deposed if he proves unfaithful. On the other hand he is to be permitted in the ministry as long as he is competent and has the favor of the church as a whole; just as in civil matters any administrator is treated as an equal among his brethren. In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator,

since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else. [LW, volume 40, p. 35]

Luther: Away now with those who want to be shepherds of many places, yes, shepherds of many shepherds; and let them glory in their own power, though meanwhile they fail to provide pasture even for themselves! In fact, so thoroughly corrupt are men's attitudes today that they take what Christ said to Peter—"Feed My sheep" (John 21:17)—and interpret it to mean: "Be a superior over My sheep, and lord it over them." This is all it means today to feed Christ's sheep, even if they have not seen a syllable of the Gospel, which alone is the pasture of the sheep. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 27: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6; 1519, Chapters 1-6* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ga 5:7). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

Luther: Therefore we should not intrude into someone else's harvest, as the devil does through his sectarians. With ardent zeal they claim to be saddened that men are being so miserably led astray, and to want to teach them the truth and rescue them from the devil's clutches. Therefore even when a man seeks, with pious zeal and good intentions, to rescue with his sound doctrine those who have been led astray into error, this is still a bad example, which gives ungodly teachers an excuse to intrude themselves, after which Satan himself occupies the sea. This example does a great deal of damage. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ga 1:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: For it does not become a pastor to live in a dishonorable manner or to administer his household and home in a disgraceful manner. It is far better to bear the contempt and hatred of adversaries than to fall into reproach and into the snare of the devil, as Paul says in 1 Tim. 3:7. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ge 37:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

Luther: "In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else." [LW, volume 40, p. 35]

Part 4: Words from the Lutheran Church Fathers

Martin Chemnitz: It is the work of God to remove a person from the ministry. Therefore as long as God endures His minister, who is teaching correctly and living blamelessly in his ministry, the Church does not have the authority to remove this servant. But when he no longer edifies the Church with his doctrine or his life but is destroying it, then God Himself will remove him...There are two reasons for God's removing ministers from their office: 1. because of their doctrine when they teach error; 2. because of their life, when they act in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed ... For just as God calls, so also He removes through means. [Chemnitz, *The Locus on The Church, Loci Theologici*, Translated by Dr. J. A. O. Preus (CPH) – 1989 Volume II, page 698ff.]

Quenstedt: The right to call qualified ministers and to remove wicked ministers belongs to the whole Church. [*The Holy Ministry*, 1696 edition translated by Poellot, 1979]

Gerhard: Now that we have explained why God ordinarily wants to use the work not of angels but of men in the ecclesiastical ministry, it still remains for us to explain *what sort of persons are to be selected from among men for the ministry*. On this topic we said earlier in the chapter on the Examination of Ordinands that they are required to have “sincerity of confession, dexterity in teaching, and integrity of life and behavior.”...To say it briefly, persons to be selected for the ministry out to be *right in faith, approved in life, and equipped with the gifts of teaching*...The common virtues are expressed, first, with general words: that he should be “blameless and without reproach[1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6]. They are expressed, second, with a specific list of some of them, [in two ways] *Through affirmation:...*Then, *through negation*. [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 264-265]

Gerhard: 182 The apostle mentions those common virtues for this reason: integrity of life and honorable behavior are required chiefly and especially of a bishop, not just because of those general reasons that demand these from all other Christians but also particularly for this reason; that they may be “examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3), that in all things and in every respect they may offer themselves as “a pattern of good works”(2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7), that they not, because of their wickedness of life, expose their ministry to the reproaches of enemies and set up an impediment or hindrance to the Word’s fruit-bearing, and thus cause the name and doctrine of the Lord to be blasphemed. [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 265-266]

Walther: Hence, the power of the public ministry rests in the church and is conferred by the church according to Christ’s express direction on certain persons specifically called to the ministry of the Word. This power the church does not have mediately by the incumbents of the office entrusted with it for the benefit of the church, but the church possesses it immediately, while on the contrary the incumbents of *the office have it mediately, for they received it from the church, to which it originally belongs*. [Church and Ministry, p. 271]

Walther: Sermon on the Office of the Ministry, 1862: The preacher is therefore distinguished from other Christians not that he were something more than a member of the body and a brother. He is rather such a member who has the obligation to serve the whole. The office is not a higher estate in Christianity. It is nothing other than a greater service. Those who hold the office serve among those who are all priests with them. Christ is the Lord of the house. The church is his bride, the matron of the house [*Hausherrin*]. The preacher is the householder. He does not exercise a power, which only he, the preacher has. The power he has is rather the power of the church. He has been entrusted with this power by the church according to God’s own order, to be exercised publicly in the name of the church. He does not dole out goods, which only he, the preacher, possesses. He doles out the goods of the church, which are conferred [*uebertragen*] to him by the church only for faithful administration in its stead. Therefore the holy apostle wrote to the Corinthians: “*Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? – They are ministers, through which you have become believers; and this to each as the Lord has given. We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, that He is the Lord, and we are your servants for Jesus’ sake.*” (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:5). [Harrison, *At Home in the House of Our Fathers*, pp. 150-151]

Walther: 1879 Convention Essay “The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”: So when [our thesis] says: The Synod should protect the congregations, one should not think this means that a congregation may not do it—that, for example, a congregation cannot judge anything at all [and] that the Synod must judge whether the pastor is teaching true or false [doctrine]. [Nor should we think] that the congregation cannot depose anyone because of godless living and that it cannot get rid of one who oversteps his authority and proves to be domineering, that only the Synod could free them. No; the congregation has full power to depose as well as to install and to judge regarding its pastor’s doctrine....

Finally, according to Thesis II, a synod that is faithful to the Confessions should...c. protect the congregations against pastors who err in doctrine, follow an offensive lifestyle and are domineering in their office. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 35]

Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: But, of course, the congregation must proceed properly. The Synod cannot sit idly by if the congregation proceeds improperly. Then the Synod also has the right to say: "If you do so and so with a pastor, then you can no longer be in the Synod." For example, *if a pastor is dismissed by a congregation because he proclaims the truth to it, the congregation would be admonished by the synod: and if that would do no good, one would have to say: "you can no longer belong to us."* But no more. That would be all. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 35]

Walther: Therefore, when a pastor uses God's Word in his congregation, whether by teaching, admonishing, reproof, or comforting, either publicly or privately, then the congregation hears Jesus Christ Himself out of his mouth. In that case it owes him unconditional obedience as the one by whom God desires to make known to it His will and lead it to eternal life, and the more faithfully a pastor administers his office, the more highly it should esteem him. A congregation has no right to depose such a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; if it does this, it rejects Jesus Christ Himself, in whose name he ministers to it. A congregation can depose an incumbent of the holy ministry only if it is clear from the divine Word that God Himself has deposed him as a wolf or hireling. Of this we read in the Holy Scriptures:

"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me" (Luke 10:16).

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). [Walther, C. (1999). *Church and Ministry: Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry* (electronic ed.) (pp. 303–304). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: There are also pastors who cause a great deal of annoyance. But the congregations should not require the pastor to live like an archangel; that he cannot do. He has flesh and blood like other Christians, and so weaknesses appear here and there. Then, if mature Christians are present, they will say to their pastor, "Dear pastor, it was not right to do what you did." If they are merely weaknesses, one must bear with them and not demand perfection [*nicht Alles auf der Goldwage wagen*] "and with the measure you use it will be measured to you" [Matthew 7:2]. But this should not be used to defend a pastor who lives in sins that dominate [him]. If he refuses to be instructed, one should show no mercy. If the congregation members of such a pastor then come to the [District/Synod] President and tell him, "This is the situation; will you agree with us if we dismiss him?" he will then reply, "Of course, that is right; such a rascal doesn't belong in the Holy Office." But the opposite also occurs, that [some] individuals make the sin greater than it is. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 6223-6230). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: After all, a pastor can become very unfaithful in his office: lazy, careless about his official acts; he may fall into sins of drunkenness and other great vices we mentioned earlier; he may become obstinate, so that no one can get along with him; he may become power-mad, so that everything has to be done his way; he may take the attitude that when he has spoken, the matter is settled; he may become lax about visiting the sick and

may snap at people when they come to see him; and he may fall into any of the many of the sins that appear in the lives of pastors.

Now, to be sure, a congregation has the right to admonish such a pastor, and to remind him of his duty, as we read in Col.4:17 where the apostle tells the Colossians, "Tell Archippus, See that you do all the work you were given to do as the Lord's servant" The apostle is here giving the congregation a direct command to admonish its bishop and to remind him to be faithful in his office. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 36]

Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: You see, a Synod will always support the congregation if it can prove that its pastor is unfaithful to his office, lazy, indifferent, immoral, power-hungry stubborn, or is living in manifest sins. Through the District President the Synod will visit the congregation and will support those who are right. He may know best how to disarm those who support the unfaithful, wicked pastor. From John's Third Epistle, verses 9 and 10, we learn that already in apostolic times a congregation was provided help by a District President, even though that title was not in use at that time. John writes: "I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who lives to be their leader, won't listen to us. So, when I come, I'll bring up what he's doing when he talks such wicked nonsense about us." [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 36]

Walther: Congregations shall not be so presumptuous as to arbitrarily depose their pastors and others who administer an ecclesiastical office. But if they fall into pernicious errors and are found guilty by lawful procedure (1 Timothy 5:19; "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses") and refuse to accept instruction from God's Word either by the congregation or by the pastors called in for this purpose; or if they become manifest as contumacious impenitent sinners; or if they have committed an offense by which they have lost their good report among those who are without and by which they cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, then Christian congregations in Christian order (to which under circumstances belongs a provisional suspension) must remove them from office as such as God Himself has put out. (Matt. 7:15: Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Hos 4:6: Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no priest to Me. John 10:5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. 1 Tim. 3:7: He must have a good report from them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.) [*The Form of a Christian Congregation*, CFW Walther, p. 128]

Walther: Thus it is also with the name 'bride of Christ,' which, as we have seen, is also applied to believing Christians in the Word of God. For as a bridegroom gives to his bride, if he really accepts her as his spouse, the keys to the entire house, and thereby makes her a participant in all his goods and the mistress of his house, and gives her power over all supplies and treasures in his house: so Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, has also given to all believing Christians, as his bride, the keys of his house, made them partakers in all his goods, and given them authority and power over all the treasures of his house, and therefore also the authority and right of calling their pastors. Whoever denies that believing Christians possess all these glories, must also deny, in defiance of the Word of God, that they are by faith the bride of Christ. [*The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*, CFW Walther, p. 30]

Walther: Right now my nephew Robert Engel is visiting here, who was a former Saxon pastor but who had to resign his office because he had written a love letter to a girl although he was already married, at a time when he was overburdened with work. It is truly regrettable for him as a person. He is as good as useless for our church since this case has become known in our circles. He was unusually well grounded in doctrine and besides is a philologist and an accomplished dialectician. Thus the devil takes those few who

have the gifts and the desires to serve the church and makes them useless. [C.F.W. Walther, Selected Writings of C.F.W. Walther, Letters CPH, vol 6, pages 117-118.]

Wyneken: In short, the office does not consist in suppression of the laity in order to elevate the clergy at the laity's expense, such that the office boasts of sovereignty and it magnanimously leaves the laity to boast of obedience. The dignity, the desire, and the joy of the true co-worker of God is to draw ever more his community of believers into their freedom and its worthy use, to encourage them and lead them ever more in the exercise of their rights, to show them how to exercise their duties that they be more and more convinced of their high calling and that they demonstrate that they are ever more worthy of that calling. He does not live in fear that the laity will overstep its boundaries. For where are the boundaries of true, spiritual, heavenly freedom? He fears that they will exercise their freedom as little as the eagle fears its young will encounter the sun in flight, with the slight anxiety that they might fly too high or above him. For where the flight approaches the boundaries of fleshly freedom, he descends; he does not ascend. There the true watchman of God stands at the boundary with the divine Word, before which the sinking child of God is ashamed, is humbled and turned back...the office is loved and honored, and God is thanked for it, and the obedience to the office mandated by God is willingly brought with the desire of the heart. That is our goal. That is what we work for. That is how carrying out the office leads to [godly] desire and joy. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 8210-8223). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Kurt Marquart, *The holy church of Christ is not at the mercy of the arbitrary fantasies of her ministers, nor are the latter subject to the tyranny of those they must serve. Both ministers and people are strictly accountable to Christ, and in Him to each other, in mutual submission to His alone-saving Word (Romans 14:4.7–14, 1 Peter 5:2–4)* [*The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry and Governance*, p. 110]

Wollenburg: The quickest way to destroy the unity of the confession of the true faith is to permit every individual pastor to appoint himself as a “watchdog” and “overseer” of every brother and every brother's congregation. Such self-appointed overseers are indeed *alлотriepiscopi* and produce a naughtiness within the church that breeds mistrust, confusion, and chaos. The most effective way to bring a social system into almost total dependence upon the practice of power is to eliminate or attempt to eliminate all forms of authority from the system. The primary principle of revolutionary philosophy is the destruction of authority within a system in order to substitute power for authority. The power which is seized becomes the means to impose the will of the revolutionary movement upon the social system. This same principle is at work in the church when self-appointed persons intrude upon the office of another.

The purpose of synodical authority as defined within the Constitution of the Synod is to protect the rights of pastors and congregations, as well as to preserve the unity of the true faith (Art. III of the Constitution). Provision is made for the election of officers and their duties are constitutionally defined and controlled. Authority undefined and unregulated deteriorates into an abuse of power. Authority, on the other hand, when it is defined places limitation on the use of power by constitutional limitations. In other words, the precise purpose of constitutional limitations or bylaws is to control the abuse of power. The destruction of authority with its constitutional limitations destroys the protection of the rights of congregations and pastors and also the unity of the true faith. The chaos which is produced is more than simply a rebellious child sticking out his tongue and saying “I won't!” The source of chaos is the lord of chaos, Satan. The command of the Lord, not to become *alлотriepiscopos* is given to prevent such mischief. [STICK TO YOUR CALL, 1 Peter 5:3, Dr. George Wollenburg, Presented to the Circuit Visitors of the Texas District, 1989]

Part 5: Additional Items.

C.F.W. Walther: The Church and The Office of The Ministry, Harrison translation.

PART TWO CONCERNING THE HOLY PREACHING OFFICE OR THE PASTORAL OFFICE

Thesis I The holy preaching office or pastoral office is an office distinct from the office of priest, which all believers have.

Thesis II The preaching office or the pastoral office is not a human institution but an office that God Himself has established.

Thesis III The preaching office is not an optional office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the Church and to which the Church is properly bound till the end of time.

Thesis IV The preaching office is not a special state in opposition to or holier than that of ordinary Christians, as was the Levitical priesthood; rather, it is an office of service.

Thesis V The preaching office has the authority to preach the Gospel and administer the holy Sacraments, as well as the authority of spiritual judgment.

Thesis VI The preaching office is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical authority, or the Keys, and through the call that is prescribed by God. The ordination of those who are called with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call.

Thesis VII The holy preaching office is the authority, conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and of all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation.

Thesis VIII The preaching office is the highest office in the Church, from which flow all other offices in the Church.

Thesis IX To the preaching office there is due respect as well as unconditional obedience when the preacher uses God's Word. Yet the preacher has no dominion in the church. Therefore, he has no right to introduce new laws or arbitrarily to establish adiaphora or ceremonies in the church. The preacher has no right to inflict and carry out excommunication alone, without the preceding knowledge of the whole congregation.

Thesis X To the preaching office, according to divine right, belongs also the office to judge doctrine, but laymen also possess this right. Therefore, in the ecclesiastical courts and councils they are accorded both a seat and vote together with the preachers.

[Walther, CFW (2012-12-01). The Church and The Office of The Ministry (Kindle Locations 550-573). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

C.F.W. Walther lists the following in his 1879 essay *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation* as reasons for a congregation to admonish its pastor and even remove its pastor from his divine call. These are items that may move a pastor into the area of reproach.

- Offensive lifestyle
- Domineering in office
- unfaithful
- indifferent
- immoral
- living in manifest sins
- lazy

- careless about official acts
- falling into sins of drunkenness and other great vices
- becoming obstinate, so that no one can get along with him
- becoming power-mad, so that everything has to be done his way
- taking the attitude that when he has spoken, the matter is settled
- becoming lax about visiting the sick and snapping at people when they come to see him

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations states the following in its “Theology and Practice of ‘the Divine Call’” (February 2003):

- ***May a call be terminated?***

How and on what basis removal takes place is a serious and sensitive matter. As we have seen earlier, C.F.W. Walther affirmed that a congregation has a right to remove a pastor, but this dare not be done presumptuously or arbitrarily. A pastor should be removed only after cause has been sufficiently established by lawful procedure, after he has refused to accept instruction, etc. Proper causes simply make it clear that God has already deposed the man as a hireling or “wolf.” [page 42]

- ***Removal from Office***

The church has traditionally laid down two grounds for deposing pastors and other servants of the Word: persistent teaching of false doctrine, and leading a scandalous and offensive life. Persistent teaching of false doctrine undermines the foundation of the faith. A scandalous life leads people to blaspheme God’s name. These causes not only provide the grounds for removing a man from service in the congregation, but they also render him ineligible for receiving any subsequent call to another congregation or place of service. He is no longer in the office of the public ministry. These reasons presume that the pastor has undermined the ministry of the Word, and in biblical terms is no longer “apt to teach” and “above reproach.”

A third reason has often been cited within the Lutheran tradition, namely, the inability or refusal to perform the duties of the office. Inability has reference to physical disabilities or diminished mental capacities that involuntarily prevent one from carrying out the responsibilities of the office. The refusal to carry out the duties of the office, in the words of Walther, is deliberate unfaithfulness in the office. This cause for removal may include behavior such as laziness, carelessness in carrying out official acts, drunkenness, obstinacy, and laxity about visiting the sick.

Walther adds two other causes, which may be regarded either as further elaborations of the two above-mentioned causes, or as separate reasons. The first of these is that a pastor may be guilty of overstepping the authority of the Word and becoming “domineering” in the office (as when he imposes his will upon a congregation in matters where the congregation has the proper authority). Finally, removal might become necessary in a situation where the pastor is not “a totally wicked person,” but may, for example, have the problem of an inadequately—or perhaps even overly—sensitive conscience.

As we have already noted, the removal of a man from the office of the public ministry is a very serious matter and should not be carried out capriciously or arbitrarily. It is of utmost importance that the church act corporately—hearers and teachers, laity and clergy together. Thus too, a congregation needs to involve the Circuit Counselor and District President. Working cooperatively, they will follow due process and so seek the best possible result for all parties involved. The congregation should also be prepared to heed the advice of the District President regarding biblical reasons for removing a man, and this in spite of a pastor’s popularity in the congregation. When a man has been removed from the office for reasons that come under the third cause listed above, it is possible that following a

period of repentance, counsel, and rehabilitation, he could once again become eligible for a call. [pages 42–43]

BPE Adopted Motion on Above Reproach Issues

The Board for Pastoral Education adopted the following motion during its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, 22 January, 2009:

The following is a list of items, that, in the opinion of the BPE, fall short of the "above reproach" standard for those who seek to serve in the office of the pastoral ministry. The items are offered, not as an exhaustive list, but rather as an example of items that should be discussed by the Council of Presidents and the two seminaries.

- Two or more divorces, though candidates with one divorce may be declined admission based upon the details of that divorce;
- Convicted of a felony;
- Convicted of a sex offense (felony or misdemeanor);
- Recent (within five years) conviction of drug or substance (including alcohol) abuse, and/or selling and trafficking in the same;
- Recent (within five years) acknowledged substance abuse;
- Recent (within five years) addictive behavior (e.g., gambling, pornography, internet pornography);
- Homosexuality.

It is understood that extremely rare and exceptional cases may present themselves, and under extremely rare circumstances may constitute possibilities for exceptions. Care should be taken that the extremely rare does not become the commonplace.

6: Concluding Thoughts:

Called workers, especially pastors, are to be "above reproach" for the following reasons:

- 1) The issue surrounding the words "above reproach" is the integrity of the Office of the Holy Ministry.
- 2) "Above reproach" is an umbrella term under which the biblical writers list specific qualifications that one must possess to pursue the pastoral office, be declared "fit" for the pastoral office, remain in the pastoral office, or be reinstated to the pastoral office.
- 3) Those who occupy the Office of the Holy Ministry must be moral, ethical, spiritual, and exemplary individuals. (ed. Comment: Men of character and good report.)
- 4) We must not confuse "forgiveness" and "fitness" for ministry. They are two different things. One needs to be "fit" to hold the pastoral office.
- 5) Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one's office disqualifies a man from being considered "fit" to pursue the pastoral office, from being declared "fit" to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, or to be reinstated to the office of the ministry.
- 6) Most important of all, a person is not "above reproach" if his specific sin, his lifestyle, or the administration of his office genuinely causes people to stumble in their faith, hinders the spread of the Gospel, or causes people to reject it. [What Does It Mean to be "Above Reproach"? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009]

With the ebb and flow of life in the church this requirement that those who fill the pastoral office are to be “above reproach” is especially important now as we find ourselves in this post-modern, post-Constantinian culture. That true, we find ourselves in a culture where up has become down, where wrong has become right, where the gross sins formerly scorned by society are now not only accepted but paraded for all to see, and where morality has been replaced by immorality as accepted norm for society.

The culture in which we live can easily taint and even corrupt our understanding of “above reproach”. We live in a society where the church, our Christ-centered confession of faith, our Law and Gospel proclamation, and where our Christian morality, are increasingly challenged, even despised. That pressures us to temper our confession, to compromise our ethical standards. But that dare never happen.

In this kind of world it bears upon us as church workers and ecclesial supervisors to be exceptionally diligent to be “above reproach”. There is much at stake: the salvation of the people we are called to serve, our own salvation, as well as the standing of the church in the eyes of the world around. For that reason it is essential that pastors be “above reproach”.

May our Lord have mercy!

Respectfully, to our Lord’s glory
Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
President SWD-LCMS

Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation

In the name of the Triune God and by His authority, in order that we might carry out His mission to the world, we hereby authorize and obligate you:

- To administer to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord;
- To administer the holy sacraments in accordance with their divine institution;
- To demonstrate the mind and spirit of Christ as you serve the members of the congregation and equip them for Christ's mission to seek and save the lost;
- To equip and enable the members of the congregation to serve one another and those outside the fellowship of the congregation;
- To perform the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner; to aid, counsel, and guide members of all ages and social conditions; to visit the sick and the dying; to admonish the indifferent and the erring; to support the members of the congregation as they extend that evangelical ministry to others;
- To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of this congregation, in particular to see to the instruction of the catechumens, both children and adults, in the Word and thus prepare them for communicant membership in the church;
- To guide the congregation in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church according to the Word of God and to assist and lead the members of the congregation in practicing the forgiven life with one another;
- To promote and guide the mission activity of the congregation as it is related to the local community and to endeavors of the Synod and its Districts, in particular to train workers and guide them in evangelism and to enlist the support of the congregation for mission work;
- To serve as a resource and guide for members of the congregation as they participate in the ministry of Christian education, and to train parents to teach the Christian faith to their children;
- To assist the congregation in adopting administrative policies and procedures that will help it carry out the mission of a Christian congregation;
- To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct; to endeavor earnestly to live in Christian unity with the members of the congregation, fellow workers, and sister congregations in the Synod; and by the grace of God to do everything possible for the edification of the congregation and the upbuilding of the church in Christ.

As the baptized people of God we partner with you to accomplish His mission to the world, and we hereby obligate ourselves:

- To receive you as a servant of Jesus Christ, to give you the honor and love and obedience that the Word prescribes, to aid you by word and deed, and to support you with our diligent, faithful assistance and prayers;
- To make faithful and regular use of the means of grace;
- To work with you to equip God's people to glorify Him and extend His kingdom by living out our baptism;
- To make appropriate arrangements for your continuing education as a professional person in the ministry of the Gospel;
- To provide for your proper maintenance according to our ability and to review your salary, housing arrangements, and all allowances periodically, beginning with the following arrangements:

Signed this _____ day of _____, A.D. _____

On behalf of _____

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Signature | _____ Position |
|--------------------|-------------------|

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Signature | _____ Position |
|--------------------|-------------------|

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Signature | _____ Position |
|--------------------|-------------------|